WHAT IS CLAIMED

1) A transfer unit for containers, comprising:
-at least one set of means by which to take up and hold a relative container leaving a first conveyor positioned at a first height;
-feed means by which the holding means are caused to advance along a predetermined path extending at least between the first conveyor and a second receiving conveyor positioned at a second height;
-means operating in conjunction with the holding means, by which the height of the selfsame holding means is varied during the course of their passage along the predetermined path.

2) A unit as in claim 1, wherein holding means comprise means by which to grip the neck of a container.

3) A unit as in claim 1, wherein feed means comprise a frame set in motion along a predetermined path consisting in a closed loop, and the holding means are associated with respective means slidable vertically in relation to the frame.

4) A unit as in claim 3, wherein means by which to vary the height of the holding means include guide means

operating in conjunction with the vertically slidable means.

5) A unit as in claims 1 to 4, comprising a plurality of holding means.

6) A unit as in claim 5 where dependent on claim 3, wherein the frame comprises a plurality of pairs of vertical guide elements each associated with respective holding means incorporating gripper means.

7) A unit as in claim 6, comprising a shaft aligned on a vertical axis supporting and driving the frame, wherein the frame comprises a disc element mounted to the top end of the shaft and carrying vertical guide elements equispaced angularly around the periphery.

8) A unit as in claim 7, wherein the guide means comprise cam profile means.

9) A unit as in claim 8, wherein cam profile means comprise a first track and a second track substantially complementary one to another, extending in combination around the closed loop path followed by the holding means.

10) A unit as in claim 9, wherein the first track extends around the cylindrical outer surface presented by a tubular element of C-shaped cross section aligned concentrically with the vertical shaft and comprising coupling and fastening means operating in conjunction with fastening means afforded by the shaft, whilst the second track is presented by a sector appearing as an arc to a circle positioned with the concave side offered to the lateral opening in the C-shaped tubular element.

11) A unit as in claim 10, wherein the width of the opening presented by the C-shaped tubular element is such that the selfsame element can be distanced from the vertical shaft by displacement in a radial direction.

12) A unit as in claims 3 and 8, wherein the slidable means comprise a slide incorporating engagement means designed to interact with the cam profile means.

13) A unit as in claims 9 and 12, wherein engagement means comprise a first roller and a second roller passing respectively along the first track and the second track.

14) A unit as in claims 2 and 12, wherein the slide comprises a pair of pivots supporting and enabling the angular movement of a pair of jaws providing the gripper means.

15) A unit as in claim 14, wherein at least one of the jaws is associated with respective actuating means designed to produce the opening and/or closing movement of the gripper means.

16) A unit as in claim 15, wherein the actuating means comprise a cam sector, and a following roller mounted to the end of an arm rigidly associated with one of the two jaws.